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SOCIAL ETHICS FOR CHURCH LEADERS.

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THE editorial paragraphs in the BIBLICAL WORLD of November introduced a subject which opens out a field of historical illustration and of application to the present-day duty and call. It has been shown that all that now legitimately goes under the name of "sociology" has been the object of profound study by representative leaders of the church in all ages, under other names. The seeds planted by Christ and his apostles in the soil of Hebrew life have grown into mighty trees, for in his words is the power of endless life.

In a noble sermon by Dr. F. H. Wines, an authority of the first rank in social and statistical science, we find this thought:

I do not deny that the Bible, apprehended by faith, sheds light upon the origin, nature, and destiny of the human race; nor that it contains a theology, the formulation of which has enlisted the energies of some of the greatest intellects that the world has known. But I hold that the Bible is also a book for this world, and that it contains a sociology or theory of human relations, equally worthy of systematic development and presentation. The fundamental principle of the biblical sociology is the ideal of Jesus, the universal reign on earth of love, in opposition to war, as war is generally understood, namely, to armed conflict between men upon the battlefield, and no less to other forms of mutually destructive conflict in trade and commerce and in other walks of social life. The pessimism of science, in relation to man, stands out in marked contrast with the optimism of religion on the same subject. This is the more remarkable because science has taught us that man can to a limited extent control and utilize the forces of nature by giving them a different direction, or by bringing one force to bear in a way to neutralize the operation of another. What science tells us we can do with nature, religion insists may also be done with human nature. The power which she has placed at our disposal for this purpose is love. In the New Testament, the original text-book for the Christian religion, we are told that evil can be overcome with good. . . . Love is not weakness, it is power.

The tradition of social study is unbroken through church history. Only a few hints and illustrations can be given. *The*

Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (*Didache*) represents the echoes of the primitive teachers, and there one will find a regular poor law, with directions for charity and dealing with tramps which sound familiar in the ear of a Charity Organizationist. Justin Martyr was able to defend Christians from the cruel misrepresentations of his age by appeal to the superior purity and charity of the disciples, which were the fruit of careful ethical instruction, enforced by faith and love.

Augustine, whose *Confessions* reveal the profound depths of spiritual insight, constructed, in his *City of God*, a philosophy of society which even yet deserves study.

Thomas Aquinas, that masterly theologian, whose works in our day are most influential with the Roman Catholic clergy, presents a system of social speculation and practice. Perhaps the influence of the papal church with the modern workingmen is due to this cause more than to any other one thing. Protestant students can hardly afford to ignore the *Summa*.

The social teachings of Luther are his attempts to apply the doctrines of the New Testament to the conditions of his age, and they had a lasting and powerful influence on the political forces of his age. Yet no man ever preached the gospel with greater force and simplicity. Melancthon, the theologian of the Reformation, interprets and applies the decalogue to the social relations and duties of the society about him.

Perhaps no English theologian has commanded more reverence for intensity of zeal, for deep spirituality, for evangelical fervor and devotion, and for sound doctrine, than the "holy" Richard Baxter. We know his *Saints' Rest* and his *Reformed Pastor*; but how few have ever read his great volume on the social duties of the Christian, the *Christian Directory*! In a huge tome of over nine hundred compact pages we have a treatise on applied Christianity, whose parts bear the significant titles: "Christian Ethics," "Christian Economics," "Christian Ecclesiastics, and "Christian Politics." If this work were not written in the tedious style of ancient and obsolete leisure, it might still serve for a text-book in Christian sociology in a modern divinity

school. Baxter's reason for giving so much labor to this branch of Christian learning is indicated in this sentence :

By long experience I am assured that this practical religion will afford both to church and state and conscience more certain and more solid peace than contending disputes, with all their practices of orthodoxness and zeal against errors for the truth, will ever bring, or did ever attain to.

The nineteenth century produced no grander character, no more truly evangelical preacher, than Thomas Chalmers; and not only Scotland, but the world, will ever owe him a debt for his practical works in charity and city missions, and for the book which reveals his principles of action, *The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns*.

Passing from literature to institutions, we discover what is, after all, the best revelation of the Christian conscience about social matters—their actual works. Spurgeon will not be suspected of heresy, and he loved to point to Stockwell Orphanage, as Elijah used fire from heaven, in attestation of the divine charity of the gospel. "The God that answers by orphanages, let him be God." Mueller's Bristol orphanage had an element of fanaticism in it, but it truly illustrated Christianity. Dr. Barnardo's missions in London furnish arguments more tangible and impressive than all the books which "apologize" for Christianity. Even those who dislike the term "Christian sociology" vaunt the names of John Howard, Elizabeth Fry, Wichern, Fliedner, as types of essential Christianity. Yet the sociologists are trying to organize the thinking which is necessary to secure economical and efficient conduct.

How do we explain and justify the erection of a separate department of instruction in Christian social service (*diakonia*)?

The exact scope of such a department must remain for some time a matter for experiment and fraternal discussion. The specialization, which is the only novel fact, requires tentative trial for adjustment. All present arrangements are confessedly provisional, but they answer a good purpose and pave the way for something better.

The explanation of this specialization is clear enough. The establishment of a new chair for investigation and instruction is

simply one example of a universal law of division of labor in the interest of thorough work. In industry specialization is essential to the most economic production of wealth. Over ten thousand different trades were listed in the German census of occupations in 1895. In every other branch of learning, in colleges and universities, the departments are being broken up into specialties far more rapidly than in the theological schools, where conservatism, to use a mild term, reigns longest. As the years of study have been multiplied since the days when our predecessors graduated bachelors at sixteen, and now extend to eleven or twelve years after the beginning of high school, a specialized curriculum is practicable. And as the different churches and mission fields demand various types of pastors and leaders, and philanthropic work has come to be a profession of itself, the courses offered must meet the new requirements of the church. Instruction in these new works of the church, the glory and beauty of heavenly love in man and for man, cannot be given by untrained teachers who have no special preparation for the task.

The justification of this department of study and teaching lies in the points already presented: the application of biblical teaching to present-day conduct, the logic of an ethical Christian theology, the lessons of church history, the needs of humanity, the salvation of men, the demand of an age which owes its progress to specialization in all fields of enterprise.

New life in trees is evidenced by new branches and more abundant fruit. The demand for the enlargement of the diacunate is the inevitable outgrowth of fresh supplies of spiritual grace. The old principles must be applied to new problems of character and duty. We must have men who study and teach the best methods of guiding this mighty stream of justice and charity which flows from the heart of God.

What social subjects should be taught in a school for Christian leaders? At present we cannot give a complete answer to this question. The general principle would seem to be that we must teach in the training school of church leadership what the conscience of the church demands. Some would say that the

theological school ought to be at least a little in advance of the average thought and life. But what does the church already require its pastors to teach and influence in the field of social obligations?

About the duty of teaching and discipline in relation to domestic morality there has never been any dispute. The family is the fundamental social institution, and on its health depends the soundness of all other institutions. But modern life has raised new problems and difficulties, as the housing question, the salvation of neglected and abandoned children, the "social evil," drink, and many others. For these new questions of practical Christian work the books on ethics hardly give a hint.

There has never been a doubt that the conscience of a living church demanded works of benevolence to the weak, the dependent, and the outcast. Jesus has not been misunderstood, he who left the good to seek the bad and bring the lost and prodigal home. But the modern church is involved in an intricate network of charity problems which only specialists can treat with any satisfaction or accuracy. The vague suggestions in old books on ethics are of no practical value to pastors, and the recent literature is itself in need of interpretation.

Next comes the burden of the unskilled laborers and their families. In this field conventional "charity" is insult and mockery to all but the depraved. And yet their condition, in many places, is one which ought to enlist the sympathy and interest of Christian men. The subject is so delicate and involved that pastors and preachers who desire to extend real help without becoming agitators and partisans are in sore need of wise and instructed guidance very early in their professional studies. If the fortunes of the struggling poor do not seem deserving of the thought and toil of the ministry, we must go back to Jesus for a revival of simple Christian justice. One of the most hurtful blunders of the Christian church in dealing with city populations is that of depending on alms for moral influence. It implies a radical misconception of social classes, and their characteristic differences and needs.

The fact is that all social relations are subjects of biblical teachings and homiletic application, and it is simply a question of extent and method. The instructed conscience of the church here is sound and wise: it demands of the preacher that he influence society by appeals to supreme interests and common welfare, and that he let alone, and rise above, topics of sensational and partisan controversy. This distinction is clear and important, but difficult to observe in particular situations. Certainly ignorance of sociology, or of all that goes properly under that name, is not a special preparation for seeing clearly the boundaries between what is suitable and what is improper for the pulpit. It is a mistake to suppose that men will be more discreet and discriminating by keeping themselves in the dark about subjects of daily concern to millions of men in our industrial communities. Instruction in the fundamental principles of sociology, and in certain selected and typical problems, will sharpen the power of discrimination and assist, though it cannot supply, common-sense. The time is past for a merely clerical, professional, and ecclesiastical study of society, its relations, duties, perils, problems, and modes of betterment. It is not wise to tack on a large study to a department of "pastoral duties," as if society were an appendage of the clergy. The opposite view must obtain. The minister is a minister. This great world does not circle about the parson as central luminary. It has a large and full life, and God has made it for good, sin excepted.

And, besides this, the church is establishing schools of training, not only for pastors, but also for their assistants, superintendents of Sunday schools, missionaries, nurses, secretaries of Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations, deaconesses, visitors, managers of great philanthropies. Particular attention must be given to these new offices in the scheme of education of competent church administrators. It would be an abnegation of function if theological seminaries should ignore this movement and leave it to go its way without sympathy and help.

It is simply necessary to a full recognition of the situation

that provision be made at least for elective courses, and for special teachers, so that at the centers of training every year adequate treatment shall be given to a broad survey of the social system of institutions, the historical development of this system, the ends of human association; and to selected topics relating to groups, movements, and problems, according to particular needs of students. In this way the minister is helped to see the world as God made it: a mighty whole, a scene of complex and varied interests, yet all unified and informed by the purpose which is central in the divine kingdom. Well may the religious leader make this one of his life-studies, that he may grow in comprehension of this magnificent field of thought and labor, may study how he may help the movement even a little, and may direct others who possess special talents and opportunities into the tasks to which they ought to devote energy and sacrifice.

Every person has his besetting sin, and this is true of each profession. A characteristic temptation of the clergyman is clericalism. The mere ecclesiastic is afflicted with an eye disease which makes all humanity look to him like the backyard of a city church. Nothing so excites the contempt of healthy men of affairs as this selfish and conceited reversal of the idea of Jesus. The climax of clericalism is seen in the outworn farce of the Vatican in relation to Italy and to the governments of the world. It is vain for a prelate to wash the feet of pilgrims with a crown of gold on his head. Not a scepter but a cross is our symbol. It does not magnify, but belittles, the office of minister to assume the attitude of dictator. To find our right place, and minister then to the growing life of redeemed humanity, is the only real satisfaction and genuine honor. He who loses his life in these furrows of time shall find it when it blooms in the holiness and happiness of the race and in the blessedness of heaven.